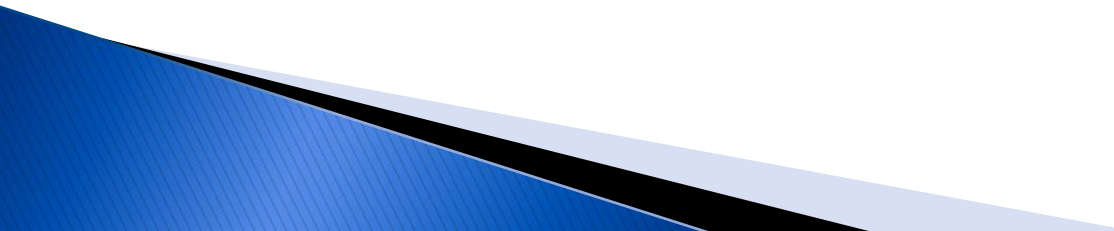





Board Best Practices

Charter Start Workshop
Presenter: Diane Demarest

What makes your board tick?

- ▶ Does your board lead the parade?
 - ▶ Does your board sing your praises?
 - ▶ Are they there when times are tough?
 - ▶ Are they first at bat for you?
 - ▶ Is your board open to new members?
 - ▶ Is your board serious about their commitment to the success of your school?
 - ▶ Do they have a vision for the future?
- 

Balancing the Business of the Board

- ▶ How do you recruit the best people to your board?
 - ▶ What talents do you need members to bring to the board?
 - ▶ Is your board clear about their responsibilities?
 - ▶ Are meetings effective and efficient?
 - ▶ Is there transparency about the activities of the board?
 - ▶ Does the board reflect on its own performance and have a continuous improvement plan?
- 

Take an Inventory of Your Needs

- There are needs that all schools have and needs change over time.
- All charter schools need a board to govern, not to do the work of staff.
- “The board is responsible for creating the future, not minding the shop” (John Carvery, Boards that Make a Difference)

Board Development

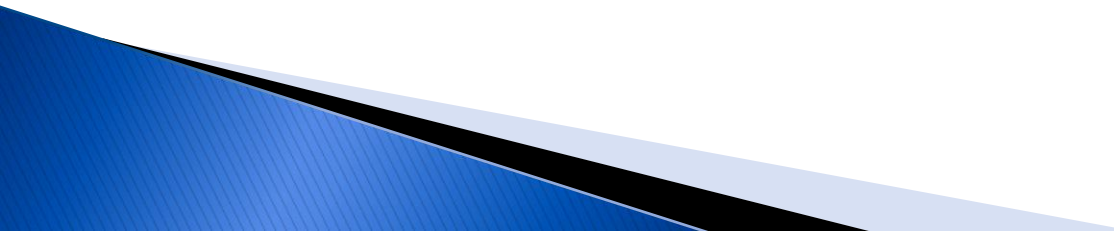
As you form your founding board, work with your founding board to move to a sustaining board, or when the nominating committee looks to recruit new members, consider your criteria for:

1. *‘Must Have’ criteria*
2. *‘Wouldn’t it be Nice’ criteria*
3. *‘Never in a Million Years’ criteria*

Follow-Up Activities:

- Individualize your wish list
- Analyze your current board with matrix
- Complete the criteria lists
- Revisit your lists prior to recruiting

Recruiting Board Members

- ▶ ½ rule
 - ▶ Change your recruiting mindset
 - ▶ Look for prospects from your existing volunteers
 - ▶ Look for prospects from referrals of current board members
 - ▶ Look for prospects from everywhere
- 

Is the board clear about their responsibilities?

- ▶ How can you help provide clarity?
 - Letter of commitment (See sample from Compass)
 - Job description & legal responsibilities of a non-profit board
 - Board handbook
 - Board Orientation and ongoing training
 - Terms and election/appointment policies
 - Ongoing evaluation – Audit yourselves.

Follow-Up Activities:

- Review your petition & board design
- Review policies
- Consider operating policies & procedures
- Continue to review; adjust as needed

Does the board reflect on its performance?

- ▶ Annual self-evaluation
 - Did each individual fulfill his/her job description
 - What work was accomplished
 - Is the board and the school in a better place than the year before
 - Gather feedback from stakeholders
- ▶ Continuous improvement plan
- ▶ Reflect with other boards
- ▶ Plan for board training

Follow-up Activities:

- See if any of the board self evaluations would work for you.
- Identify your training needs
- Network with others

Are Board Meetings Efficient & Effective?

- ▶ Review your history: (meeting minutes a good source of data)
 - How long are your meetings?
 - Do you stay on task?
 - Are tasks assigned and follow-up actions completed?
 - How would each member answer this question?
What gets in the way?
 - What is board turnover like?

Follow-up Activities:

- Summarize your records
- Review the data
- Have a conversation with your board and/or former board members
- Identify a mentor
- Is your minutes format working well? (See sample)

Is there transparency about the activities of the board?

- ▶ Review the public meeting law and reflect on your practices
- ▶ Where are meeting notices posted?
- ▶ Where are meeting minutes posted?
- ▶ Are activities of the board summarized for stakeholders?
- ▶ Is dialogue encouraged?

Follow-up Activities:

- Checklist for open meeting law
- Check list of your school's procedures related to posting of mtg announcements, agendas and minutes.
- Best practices for minutes

What about Founders Syndrome?

Anatomy of the Founder Syndrome

The founder syndrome is often described as a 'trap' in which entrepreneurs get caught in a pattern of behaviors unbeneficial to their businesses.

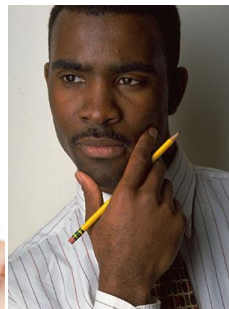
The term 'syndrome' implies a behavioral malady, or a combination of unhealthy attributes such as poor judgment, inflexibility, or rampant ego. But how is it that such savvy, creative, alert individuals become irrational, imperceptive, and inflexible?

Is there a 'flaw' in the entrepreneurial psyche or does something happen to them in the course of building their businesses? As we hope to show, the reality is that the founder syndrome occurs very naturally as a consequence of organizational shifts and contradictions which the founder cannot quickly reconcile.

Symptoms of Founders Syndrome

The following soul-searching questions may help you determine if you are indeed that kind of founder. If you are brave, you might ask those around you what they would answer. You may be surprised at what you learn.

- ▶ Can you say (and mean it), “When I’m gone, things will be done differently, and that’s ok.”?
- ▶ Are you fighting to stay on “for the good of the organization”?
- ▶ Can you not envision what your life would be like if you didn’t have the organization to run? Is it part of who you are?
- ▶ Are you afraid that if you leave, the organization will change into something that is no longer what you want it to be?
- ▶ Can you separate the issue your organization is about from your stake in that issue? From your stake in the organization?
- ▶ Do you use the words, “My organization,” or “My school”?
- ▶ Do you fluctuate between bragging and despairing of the fact that you are indispensable?



Stages of Organizational Growth:

- ▶ **Incubation**

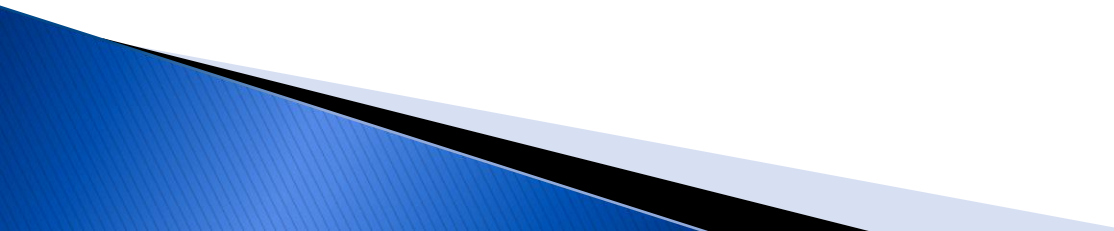
Life focuses on building commitment to a compelling vision. It is a time of possibilities, audacious dreams of a better tomorrow.

- ▶ **Stepping Out**

So the founder becomes a sales person. He knows the vision best, and is by far its most passionate advocate. Many doors are knocked upon, many late-night candles burned, many promises and proposals made. The support players pitch in as required or instructed. The school has to survive before the founder can even contemplate wearing a 'nurturing' leader hat.

Acceleration

Organizations which emerge from this challenging testing stage are rewarded with a taste of success. First students enroll, teachers are hired, purchase a building, and school opens. The pace accelerates and each day presents new situations and new crises.



▶ **Growing Pains**

Inevitably the successful business begins to experience the growing pains of adolescence. Lacking processes, systems or discipline, the firm is inconsistent in its overall performance. Founding principal may leave at this point.

▶ **Founder Syndrome – Groundhog Day**

For those founders who remain, an outside savior is recruited with a mandate to do things differently, professionalize, and ‘clean-up the messes’. Yet the new leader immediately creates anxiety precisely because he is himself different. He doesn’t adhere to the 7/24 work schedule of the founding team members, he designs and talks about systems, sits in his office, holds meetings, and makes changes.

Robert Hebert, Ph.D., StoneWood Group Inc,



Avoid the trap–

- ▶ **Buy into lifecycles.** There are common developmental patterns which cut across most emerging businesses. These are lifecycle themes of birth, adolescence, maturity, and even decline
- ▶ **Get Real.** Developing oneself requires a realistic assessment of current strengths and weaknesses
- ▶ **Map the Gap.** Feedback and self-appraisal provides a sense of a person's current portfolio of skills as a leader. What is the skill set of the leader that is needed as a school grows?
- ▶ **Develop and Hire.** Invest time and effort into the weakest areas.
- ▶ **Get a Mentor.** The smart founder identifies a trusted advisor, someone who has lived his present and future, grown a school like his, and who he can talk to, and learn from.

Prevention – Forethought in your creation:

It means building a number of structures into the by-laws at the beginning:

- ▶ term-limits for board members -- the usual recommendation is two terms of three years;
- ▶ procedures to ensure that board members are selected based on both the current and anticipated needs of the organization;
- ▶ job descriptions for directors;
- ▶ provisions for board member evaluation, training, and (if needed) removal;
- ▶ a clear statement that the CEO takes direction from the board, IS NOT A MEMBER OF THE BOARD, and can be replaced if s/he doesn't observe the policies of and the (reasonable) goals set by the board.
- ▶ The board can show the founders that their personal development is a matter of great importance with profound implications for the long term health of the school as a whole.

What if you're in the stew now?

- ▶ Communicate
- ▶ Acknowledge & Affirm (help them go through the developmental stages and see their contributions)
- ▶ Record the history and celebrate it.
- ▶ Articulate your mission & vision clearly
- ▶ Talk about the stages of development
- ▶ Celebrate Founders Day



Questions ~ Discussion